

there are a few school districts in the State of Colorado and other places that are highly dependent upon this particular piece of legislation.

So I am here this evening to thank my colleagues for being sensitive to these public land-bound counties that simply do not have fee land to finance their essential needs—roads, bridges, schools—and they cannot ask the other taxpayers to assume their burden outside the counties within the State.

My State anticipated the difficulty of reauthorizing and created some contingency, but still it would not have funded the full school program. So tonight we have acted and sent a very clear message to these counties, to these schools that we take educating the young people of these school districts as a high priority, that we see the vitality of these communities as extremely important.

So tonight, in section 601, the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Program, we have reauthorized Craig-Wyden. I thank my colleagues for allowing that to happen.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Thank you, Mr. President. I just have a few short remarks.

IMPROVED ADOPTION INCENTIVES AND RELATIVE GUARDIANSHIP SUPPORT ACT OF 2008

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I thank my friend from Montana, Senator BAUCUS, for the terrific work he did when I talked to him on the Senate floor in July and he made a point of speeding up and shepherding through the Improved Adoption Incentives and Relative Guardianship Support Act of 2008. It was his leadership that made such a difference. I am proud to be a cosponsor of that bill, which was introduced by Senator GRASSLEY in May and passed the Finance Committee unanimously earlier this month.

Since its enactment in 1998, the Adoption Incentives Program has helped nearly 450,000 children in all 50 States and the District of Columbia move from foster care to permanent homes. In my State of Ohio, more than 18,000 adoptions have been finalized through this program. It has helped incredible people such as Joe and Becky Puckett of Conover, OH. After raising children of their own, the Pucketts adopted four children with special needs out of the foster care system. Without reauthorization, this important program would have expired on September 30. Thankfully, this bill passed last night by unanimous consent.

I commend the senior Senator from Montana and others for their tireless support and the hard work they have done on behalf of adopted children and families who adopt in our great country. I thank the Senator from Montana.

I yield the floor, Mr. President.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

PAUL WELLSTONE AND PETE DOMENICI MENTAL HEALTH PARITY AND ADDICTION EQUITY ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, something happened on the floor of the Senate moments ago which was a long time in the making. We passed a bill, the mental health parity bill, that has been debated in this Chamber for 10 years or more.

The reason I come to the floor today, after its passage, is to note one of the Members of the Senate who was an inspiration for this bill. His name was Paul Wellstone. Six years ago, he died in a plane crash, running for election in the State of Minnesota. He used to sit in the back row over here and at a corner desk. He had an especially long cord for his microphone, and he used to wander all up and down the aisle talking. It was a sight to behold—a short, little fellow, and because of his passion for college wrestling, his back was all beat up and he kind of hobbled around. But he had a heart of gold, and he was one of these people you loved to be serving with because he brought out the best in you.

The last time I ever saw him was here in the well of the Senate on the night of the vote authorizing the war in Iraq. He was one of 23 of us who voted against it.

I knew he was going home to Minnesota to face a tough election, and I said to him: I hope this doesn't cost you the election, Paul.

He said: It is all right if it does. This is what I believe. This is what Minnesota expects of me. And whatever happens, I am all right.

That was the last conversation I had with him. Within days, he died in a plane crash.

When we returned after a memorial service and a lot of heartfelt expressions of sympathy for him and his wife Sheila, who died, as well as members of their staff, there was always a question about, what is a fitting tribute to Paul Wellstone for a great, inspiring legislative career? Those of us who knew him knew the last thing in the world he would ever want is a statue or a bridge named after him or a post office—just not the kind of thing that would mean anything to Paul. But this bill, the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction

Equity Act of 2008, is the tribute Paul Wellstone would have wanted.

I thank Senator PETE DOMENICI, who was his partner in this effort for this mental health parity bill, for agreeing to allow Paul Wellstone's name to be the lead name on this legislation. It will be the Wellstone-Domenici bill for all of us, and both of them deserve praise for all the work they did. But when PETE DOMENICI said: Put his name first, it meant a lot to many of us. This was the fitting tribute we were hoping for Paul Wellstone.

What does it mean? It means for Paul Wellstone's family and the families of millions of Americans that mental health will now be treated differently in their health insurance plan. For the longest time, we have languished in ignorance over mental health. We have fed our prejudices instead of learning about this illness. We have treated it not as an illness but a curse, and we have basically said that we officially give up on finding cures for mental illness.

That is just plain wrong on every count. Mental illness is an illness. For the vast majority of Americans, it is a curable illness. What those suffering from mental illness need is professional assistance and the right medication, and many of them will lead absolutely normal, happy, productive lives. But the health insurance companies refused to cover mental illness—most of them—so many people with family members who were suffering from mental illness had no place to turn, and many times they could not afford the medications, and many times their lives were compromised as a result.

Paul Wellstone and PETE DOMENICI said a long time ago that is just unfair and America is a better place. Thanks to their hard work and inspiration, thanks to the hard work of TEDDY KENNEDY, who should have been here today voting for it—his name belongs in this pantheon as well when it comes to mental health parity—TOM HARKIN, and MAX BAUCUS, who put this in this package to make sure it passed—I just want to say it is a great day for America, a great day for us to give so many millions of Americans who struggle with mental illness or have a member of their family struggling with mental illness a fighting chance. That is what this gives them: a fighting chance that their health insurance policies will cover this, for the first time in many instances. It is long overdue, and this tribute to Paul Wellstone is long overdue. But 6 years after he left this Chamber, 6 years after he died, we finally gave the right tribute to a great man who served us so well.

Mr. President, today is an important day for the U.S. Senate and the Nation.

With the passage of the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, the Senate not only acknowledges the struggle for civil rights in our country, but also the fight of one man never neglected that struggle.